



Turning outrage into power: How far right is changing GOP

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy appears to have settled on a strategy to deal with a handful of Republican lawmakers who have stirred outrage with violent, racist and sometimes Islamophobic comments. If you can't police them, promote them. The path to power for Republicans in Congress is now rooted in the capacity to generate outrage. The alarming language, and the fundraising haul it increasingly produces, is another example of how Donald Trump, the former president, has left his mark on politics, changing the way Republicans rise to influence and authority. Success in Congress, once measured by bills passed

and constituents reached, is now gauged in many ways by the ability to attract attention, even if it is negative as the GOP looks to reclaim a House majority next year by firing up Trump's most ardent supporters. That has helped elevate a group of far-right lawmakers — including Reps. Lauren Boebert of Colorado, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Paul Gosar of Arizona — whose inflammatory comments once would have made them pariahs. Rather than face punishment for personal attacks that violate longstanding norms of Congress, they've been celebrated by conservatives, who have showered Boebert and Greene with campaign cash.

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House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., responds to reporters at the Capitol in Washington, Dec. 3, 2021, about the behavior of Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo.

Associated Press

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Continued from Front

"We are not the fringe. We are the base of the party," Greene, who has previously endorsed calls to assassinate prominent Democrats, said last week on a podcast hosted by former Trump adviser Steve Bannon.

The hands-off approach by Republican leadership gives them license to spread hate speech, conspiracy theories and misinformation that can have real world consequences, while testing the resolve of Democrats, who already removed Gosar and Greene from their committees.

It's also a different tack from the one McCarthy took in 2019 when he stripped then-Rep. Steve King of Iowa of his committee assignments for lamenting that white supremacy and white nationalism had become offensive terms. Boebert offers the latest example.

In two videos that surfaced recently she likened Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Minnesota Democrat who is one of three Muslims in Congress, to a terrorist concealing a bomb in a backpack. Boebert has also repeatedly referred to Omar as belonging to a "jihad squad," as well as "black-hearted" and "evil."

Her comments drew widespread condemnation and led to calls for Boebert to become the third GOP lawmaker this year to be removed from congressional committees. But instead of publicly apologizing to Omar, a defiant Boebert insisted that Omar should be the one to issue a public apology "to the American people" for her "anti-American" rhetoric, as well as past "anti-Semitic" comments, which Democrats condemned at the time.

In the uproar that followed,



From left, Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., attend the House Judiciary Committee oversight hearing of the United States Department of Justice with testimony from Attorney General Merrick Garland, Oct. 21, 2021 on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

Omar received death threats, including a voice-mail left by a man who called her a "traitor" and suggested she would be soon be taken "off the face of the (expletive) earth."

"We cannot pretend this hate speech from leading politicians doesn't have real consequences," Omar said Tuesday while calling on the Republican Party to "actually do something to confront anti-Muslim hatred in its ranks."

Boebert, meanwhile, burnished her image through an appearance on Fox News where she blamed Democrats who "want to cancel me" for the controversy. She has raked in \$2.7 million so far this year, making her one of the top Republican fundraisers, according to campaign finance disclosures.

McCarthy, who is in line to become speaker if Republicans retake the majority in the 2022 midterm elections, downplayed the controversy Friday. He credited Boebert for attempting

to privately apologize in a phone call with Omar, while breezing past Boebert's refusal to do so publicly.

"In America, that's what we do," he said. "And then we move on."

But McCarthy has also indicated that there will be little consequence for personal attacks. Just last month he said those punished by Democrats could be in line for a promotion if he becomes speaker, floating the possibility that Gosar and Greene "may have better committee assignments" than before.

That also poses a vexing issue for Democrats. During a Wednesday caucus meeting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi condemned Boebert's behavior, but cautioned that restraint was needed.

"This is hard because these people are doing it for the publicity," Pelosi said, according to a person in the room, who insisted on anonymity to discuss private deliberations. "There's a

judgment that has to be made about how we contribute to their fundraising and their publicity on how obnoxious and disgusting they can be."

In many cases, the incentive to outrage can outweigh the consequences. Greene arrived in Congress this year with a well documented history of making inflammatory comments. A former adherent of the QAnon conspiracy theories, she once mused that a wealthy Jewish family may have used space lasers to spark California wildfires. She's also harassed survivors of school shootings, accused Pelosi of committing crimes punishable by death and appeared in a 2019 video at the Capitol in which she argued Omar and another Muslim representative weren't "really official" members of Congress because they didn't take the oath of office on the Bible.

Since her election she's used her nonstop attacks and viral online moments

to reap a \$6.3 million fundraising windfall — more than three times the cost of the average congressional campaign — while proving to be a speaking draw at Republican fundraisers around the country.

"If you say something bats— crazy, if you say something extreme, you are going to raise money," said Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., who is one of the few Republicans to publicly criticize the rhetoric of her colleagues. Mace, who publicly feuded with Greene last week, said the Georgia lawmaker was a "grifter of the first order" who takes advantage of "vulnerable conservatives."

Gosar, who was censured last month after posting an animated video of himself killing Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, is nowhere near as prolific of a fundraiser. But he has become a celebrated figure for white nationalists and has made appearances at fringe right-wing events, including a gathering in Florida last February hosted by Nick Fuentes, an internet personality who has promoted white supremacist beliefs. Still, some Republicans say just because the three have achieved a measure of fame doesn't mean they have accumulated real influence or staying power.

"There's always some gifted communicator who comes in," said Rep. Tom Cole, a 10-term Oklahoma Republican, who used the GOP class of 1994, when Republicans took over the House for the first time in decades, as an example. "We're a long way of knowing how long they'll stay. A lot of the brightest stars of the 1994 class were gone within eight years."

Besides he added: "The reality is the first six years, the only thing you are going to do is what they let you." □

Report says Russian hackers haven't eased spying efforts

By ERIC TUCKER and FRANK BAJAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The elite Russian state hackers behind last year's massive SolarWinds cyberespionage campaign hardly eased up this year, managing plenty of infiltrations of U.S. and allied government agencies and foreign policy think tanks with consummate craft and stealth, a leading cybersecurity firm reported Monday.

On the anniversary of the public disclosure of the SolarWinds intrusions, Mandiant said the hackers associated with Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency continued to steal data "relevant to Russian interests" with great effect using novel, stealthy techniques that it detailed in a mostly technical report aimed at helping security professionals stay alert.

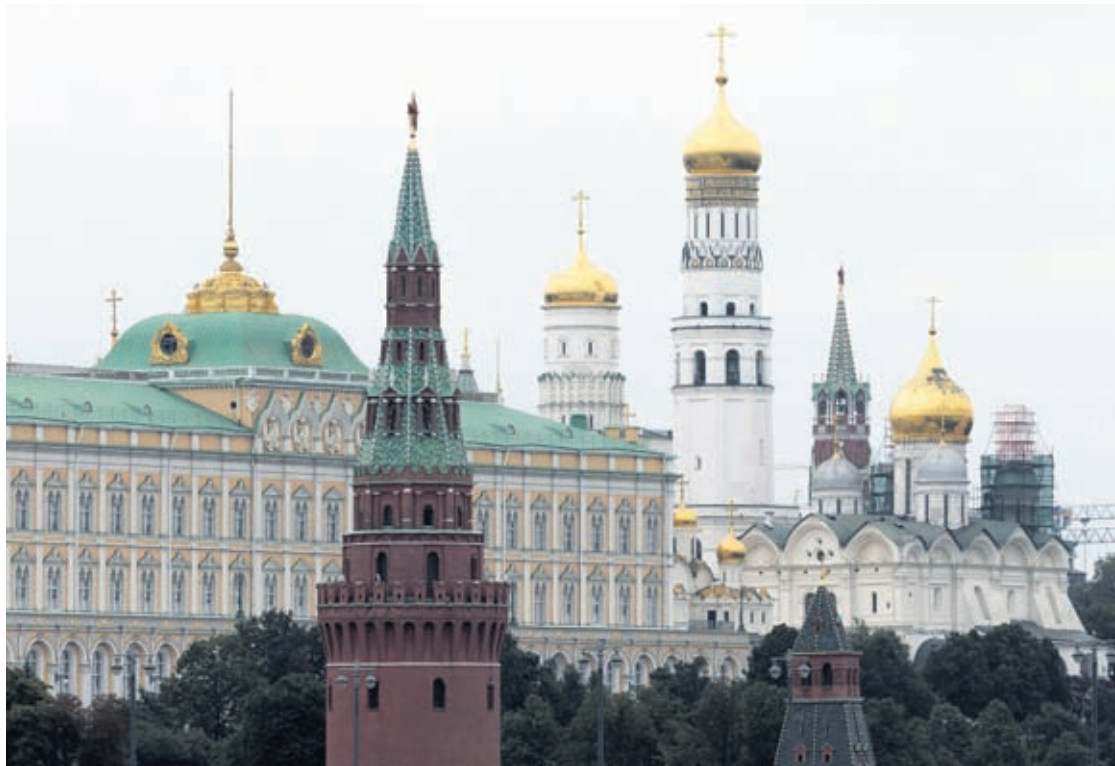
It was Mandiant, not the U.S. government, that disclosed SolarWinds.

While the number of government agencies and companies hacked by the SVR was smaller this year than last, when some 100 organizations were breached, assessing the damage is difficult, said Charles Carmakal, Mandiant's chief technical officer. Overall, the impact is quite serious. "The companies that are getting hacked, they are also losing information."

"Not everybody is disclosing the incident(s) because they don't always have to disclose it legally," he said, complicating damage assessment.

The Russian cyber spying unfolded, as always, mostly in the shadows as the U.S. government was consumed in 2021 by a separate, eminently "noisy" and headline-grabbing cyber threat — ransomware attacks launched not by nation-state hackers but rather criminal gangs. As it happens, those gangs are largely protected by the Kremlin.

The Mandiant findings follow an October report from Microsoft that the hackers, whose umbrella group it



The Kremlin in Moscow, Sept. 29, 2017.

calls Nobelium, continue to infiltrate the government agencies, foreign policy think tanks and other organizations focused on Russian affairs through the cloud service companies and so-called managed services providers on which they increasingly rely. Mandiant tips its hat to Microsoft's threat researchers in the report.

Mandiant researchers said the Russian hackers "continue to innovate and identify new techniques and tradecraft" that lets them linger in victim networks, hinder detection and confuse attempts to attribute hacks to them. In short, Russia's most elite state-backed hackers are as crafty and adaptable as ever.

Mandiant did not identify individual victims or describe what specific information may have been stolen but did say unspecified "diplomatic entities" that received malicious phishing emails were among the targets.

Often, the researchers say,

the hackers' path of least resistance to their targets were cloud-computing services. From there, they used stolen credentials to infiltrate networks. The report describes how in one case they gained access to one victim's Microsoft 365 system through a stolen session. And, the report says, the hackers routinely relied

on advanced tradecraft to cover their tracks.

One clever technique discussed in the report illustrates the ongoing cat-and-mouse game that digital espionage entails. Hackers set up intrusion beachheads using IP addresses, a numeric designation that identifies its location on the internet, that

were physically located near an account they are trying to breach — in the same address block, say, as the person's local internet provider. That makes it highly difficult for security software to detect a hacker using stolen credentials posing as someone trying to access their work account remotely.

The SolarWinds hack exploited vulnerabilities in the software supply-chain system and went undetected for most of 2020 despite compromises at a broad swath of federal agencies — including the Justice Department — and dozens of companies, primarily telecommunications and information technology providers and including Mandiant and Microsoft.

The hacking campaign is named SolarWinds after the U.S. software company whose product was exploited in the first-stage infection of that effort. The Biden administration imposed sanctions last April in response to the hack, including against six Russian companies that support the country's cyber efforts. □

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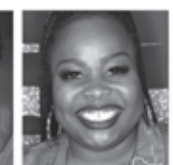
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Trump media venture under scrutiny by market regulators

By **STAN CHOE** and **BERNARD CONDON**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Regulators are looking into the deal that would bring Donald Trump's new social media company to the stock market, one that has attracted both legions of fans of the former president and people looking to make a quick profit.

The company partnering with Trump Media & Technology Group acknowledged the inquiries in a filing it made with regulators on Monday. It also gave some financial forecasts for the company, which is hoping to rival Twitter and other platforms that banned Trump, along with Netflix and other streaming video services. It said over the weekend that it's lined up \$1 billion in promised investments from a group of unnamed institutional investors.

The regulatory questions focus on the October announcement by Trump's media venture that it would merge with Digital World Acquisition Corp. That company had launched on the U.S. stock market three weeks earlier with the sole purpose of finding a privately held company



In this July 24, 2021, file photo former President Donald Trump smiles as he pauses while speaking to supporters at a Turning Point Action gathering in Phoenix.

Associated Press

to buy. It's often referred to by its trading symbol of "DWAC."

DWAC said Monday that it is cooperating with "the preliminary, fact-finding inquiries" by the the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority.

The SEC early last month requested documents related to meetings of DWAC's board, trading policies and communications be-

tween DWAC and Trump's media venture, among other things. According to DWAC, the SEC's request said the commission's "investigation does not mean that the SEC has concluded that anyone violated the law or that the SEC has a negative opinion of DWAC or any person, event, or security."

The SEC could be looking at whether DWAC and Trump's company had any

conversations about a deal before DWAC's own initial public offering of stock, said Jay Ritter, a professor at the University of Florida who is an expert on IPOs. DWAC is sitting on about \$293 million in cash raised through its IPO.

Under rules for these blank-check companies, known as special-purpose acquisition companies, or SPACs, they're not supposed to line up acquisition targets

before selling their own shares. Senator Elizabeth Warren on Nov. 17 wrote a letter to the SEC's chair, Gary Gensler, asking if the agency is exploring whether DWAC had violated the law by holding such discussions and misleading potential investors by failing to let them know about it before its IPO.

Asked how worried he would be about the SEC's investigation if he were on the receiving end, Ritter said, "It depends on what I knew. This could be innocuous or pro-forma stuff, or it could be really serious."

It's not clear whether the issues that Warren raised were behind the regulatory request for documents. DWAC and Trump Media did not respond immediately to requests for comment on Monday.

An SEC spokesperson declined to comment beyond saying, "The SEC does not comment on the existence or nonexistence of a possible investigation."

Seapartely, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, or FINRA, asked in late October and early November for a review of trading in DWAC's stock before the Oct. 20 merger deal was announced. □

Bob Dole to lie in state at Capitol as nation honors senator



Lowered to half-staff in honor of former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas, flags fly in the breeze before dawn on the National Mall with the U.S. Capitol in the background, Monday, Dec. 6, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bob Dole's casket will lie in state in the U.S. Capitol on Thursday as congressional leaders honor the former

Republican presidential candidate and World War II veteran who served in Congress for 36 years.

Dole died Sunday at the

age of 98. He was a leader known for his caustic wit, which he often turned on himself but didn't hesitate to turn on others, too. He shaped tax and foreign policy and worked vigorously to help the disabled, enshrining protections against discrimination in employment, education and public services in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The U.S. Capitol has been considered the most suitable place for the nation to pay final tribute to its most eminent citizens by having their remains lie in state. The commemoration will include a formal arrival and departure ceremony.

"Senator Dole was an extraordinary patriot, who devoted his entire life to serv-

ing our nation with dignity and integrity," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. Dole, representing Kansas, served four terms in the House and more than four terms in the Senate. He won the Republican nomination in 1996, but was defeated when President Bill Clinton won a second term. He was also 1976 GOP vice presidential candidate on the losing ticket with President Gerald Ford.

"Those of us who were lucky to know Bob well ourselves admired him even more," said Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate. "A bright light of patriotic good cheer burned all the way from Bob's teenage combat heroics through his whole career in Washington and

through the years since. We look forward to honoring his life and legacy at the Capitol."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said he didn't get to serve with Dole, but "his reputation and his achievements, and most of all his character preceded him."

Dole received two Purple Hearts for his valor in World War II. Throughout his political career, he carried the mark of war. Charging a German position in northern Italy in 1945, Dole was hit by a shell fragment that crushed two vertebrae and paralyzed his arms and legs. The young Army platoon leader spent three years recovering in a hospital and never regained use of his right hand. □

Nobel Prizes awarded in pandemic-curtailed local ceremonies

By JILL LAWLESS and SETH BORENSTEIN

LONDON (AP) — Three 2021 Nobel Prize laureates said Monday that climate change is the biggest threat facing the world — yet they remain optimistic — as this year's winners began receiving their awards at scaled-down local ceremonies adapted for pandemic times.

For a second year, COVID-19 has scuttled the traditional formal banquet in Stockholm attended by winners of the prizes in chemistry, physics, medicine, literature and economics, which were announced in October. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded separately in Oslo, Norway.

Literature laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah was first to get his prize in a lunchtime ceremony Monday at the Swedish ambassador's grand Georgian residence in central London.

Ambassador Mikaela Kumlin Granit said the U.K.-based Tanzanian author had been awarded the Nobel Prize in literature for his "uncompromising and compassionate penetra-



Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian-born novelist and emeritus professor who lives in the UK, receives the 2021 Nobel Prize for Literature medal and diploma from the Ambassador of Sweden Mikaela Kumlin Granit, during a ceremony at the Swedish Ambassador's Residence in London, Monday, Dec. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

tion of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents."

"Customarily you would receive the prize from the hands of His Majesty, the king of Sweden," she told Gurnah at the ceremony attended by friends, fam-

ily and colleagues. "However, this year you will be celebrated with a distance forced upon us because of the pandemic."

Gurnah, who grew up on the island of Zanzibar and arrived in England as an 18-year-old refugee in the 1960s, has drawn on his

experiences for 10 novels, including "Memory of Departure," "Pilgrims Way," "Afterlives" and "Paradise." He has said migration is "not just my story — it's a phenomenon of our times."

Italian physics laureate Giorgio Parisi was receiving his prize at a ceremony in

Rome. U.S.-based physics laureate Syukuro Manabe, chemistry laureate David W.C. MacMillan and economic sciences laureate Joshua D. Angrist will be given their medals and diplomas in Washington.

MacMillan, German physics prize winner Klaus Haselmann and economics prize winner Guido Imbens, who is Dutch but lives in the United States, had a joint virtual news conference Monday where they were asked what they consider the biggest problem facing humanity and what they worry about most. All three answered climate change, with Imbens calling it the world's "overarching problem."

"Climate change is something which is clearly going to have a large impact on society," MacMillan said. "But at the same time given the science, given the call to arms amongst scientists, I really feel more optimism. And I feel there's a real moment happening with scientists moving towards trying to solve this problem."

"I would bet on that fact that we would solve this problem," MacMillan said. □

Fearing misuse, Israel tightens supervision of cyber exports

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's Defense Ministry on Monday announced that it was tightening supervision over cyber exports — a move that follows a series of scandals involving Israeli spyware company NSO Group.

The ministry said the countries purchasing Israeli cyber technology would have to sign a declaration pledging to use the products "for the investigation and prevention of terrorist acts and serious crimes only."

It said countries that violate the terms of use could be subject to sanctions, "including limiting the cyber system and/or disconnecting it."

The announcement made no mention of NSO. But it came just days after it was revealed that 11 U.S. State

Department employees were hacked with NSO spyware. The employees were all located in Uganda and included some foreign service officers, said a person familiar with the matter, who was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation.

It was the first known instance of NSO Group's trademark Pegasus spyware being used against U.S. government personnel. Last month, the U.S. Commerce Department blacklisted NSO, barring the company from using U.S. technology. The blacklisting has raised questions about NSO's financial outlook and ability to survive, and the company has acknowledged that it is trying to reverse the decision.

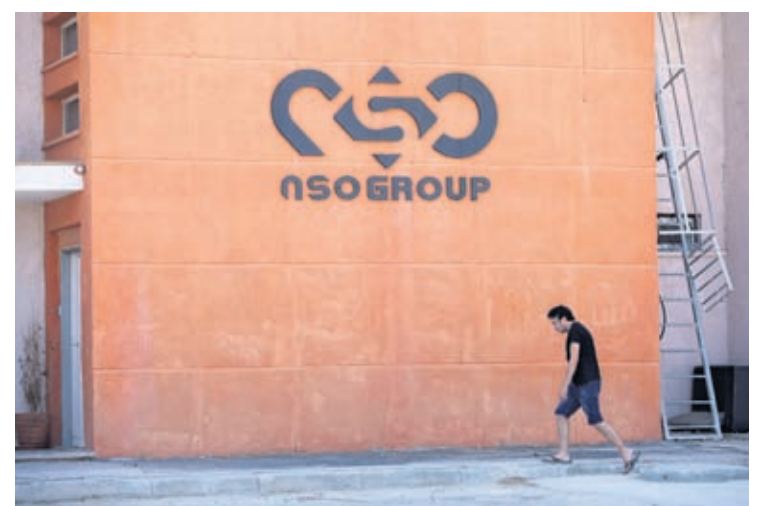
Apple also sued NSO last week over its hacking of iPhones and other Apple

products, calling the Israeli company "amoral 21st century mercenaries." Facebook has filed a lawsuit over similar allegations that it intruded its popular WhatsApp messaging system.

Pegasus allows its operator to gain access to a target's mobile phone, including contacts, text messages and real-time communications.

NSO says it sells its technologies to governments only to battle crime and terrorism and that it has strict safeguards to prevent abuse. Company officials have acknowledged cutting off several customers due to misuse.

However, human rights groups and outside researchers have said the company's safeguards are insufficient. They say customers have abused Pega-



A logo adorns a wall on a branch of the Israeli NSO Group company, near the southern Israeli town of Saphir, Aug. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

sus to keep tabs on journalists, human rights activists and political dissidents from Mexico to Saudi Arabia to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Critics have also accused Israel of lax oversight over the digital surveillance industry.

NSO declined to comment

on the Defense Ministry guidelines. Last week, however, it said it had immediately shut down customers "potentially relevant" to the Uganda case. It also vowed to take legal action against customers if a violation of their contract was found. □

Myanmar's Suu Kyi convicted in further blow to democracy

By **GRANT PECK**
Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Aung San Suu Kyi, the civilian leader of Myanmar who was ousted in a de facto coup this year, was convicted on two charges Monday and handed a four-year sentence that was quickly cut in half — in proceedings widely criticized as a further effort by the country's military rulers to roll back the democratic gains of recent years.

The verdict — on charges of incitement and violating coronavirus restrictions — serves to cement a dramatic reversal of fortunes for the Nobel Peace laureate, who spent 15 years under house arrest for resisting the Southeast Asian nation's generals but then agreed to work alongside them when they promised to usher in democratic rule. The case is only the first in a series brought against the 76-year-old Suu Kyi since her arrest on Feb. 1 — the day the army seized power, claiming massive voting fraud in last year's election. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won that vote in a landslide, and independent election observers did not detect any major irregularities.

Just as the takeover has been met with fierce resistance, so too was the verdict, including a spirited protest in the central city of Mandalay, where demonstrators chanted slogans and sang songs popularized during pro-democracy protests in 1988.

They also took to social media, which has been an important arena for resistance to the military. Htoo Ko, a medical doctor and popular travel blogger who is also an activist, wrote: "They have expended their maximum effort in carrying out evil. The people will be free only if we win the revolution, so work harder for the revolution."

The cases against Suu Kyi are widely seen as contrived to discredit her and keep her from running in the next election — and many in the international community decried Monday's



Protesters hold portraits of deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi during an anti-coup demonstration in Mandalay, Myanmar on March 5, 2021.

Associated Press

verdict as a farce. If found guilty of all the charges she faces, Suu Kyi could be sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. She is being held by the military at an unknown location — and state television reported that she would serve her sentence there.

That sentence was reduced hours after it was handed down in what the report said was an amnesty ordered by the country's military leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.

Suu Kyi is widely revered at home for her role in the country's pro-democracy movement — and was long viewed abroad as an icon of that struggle, epitomized by her 15 years under house arrest.

But since her release in 2010, she has been heavily criticized for the gamble she made: showing deference to the military while ignoring and, at times, even defending rights violations — most notably a 2017 crackdown on Rohingya Muslims that rights groups have labeled genocide.

While she has disputed allegations that army personnel killed Rohingya civilians, torched houses and raped women and she remains immensely popular at home, that stance has

tarnished her reputation abroad.

The incitement charge Suu Kyi faced centered on statements posted on her party's Facebook page after she and other party leaders were detained by the military. She was accused of spreading false or inflammatory information that could disturb public order. In addition, she faced a charge of violating coronavirus restrictions for her appearance at a campaign event ahead of the elections last year.

Dr. Sasa, spokesperson for the National Unity Government, an opposition group that has declared itself the country's shadow administration, called the verdict "a shameful day for the rule of law, justice and accountability in Myanmar" and said it represented an effort to "replace our dreams with military dictatorship forever." He uses only one name.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called the proceedings a "sham trial," while Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said it was just the beginning of a process that "will most likely ensure that Suu Kyi is never allowed to be a free woman again."

The United States joined others in calling for her release.

"The regime's continued disregard for the rule of law and its widespread use of violence against the Burmese people underscore the urgency of restoring Burma's path to democracy," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement, using a former name for Myanmar.

As is typical, China, a neighbor that has maintained friendly ties with Myanmar's military leaders, declined to criticize the verdict but urged all parties to work together to continue the democratic transition.

Suu Kyi's trials are closed to the media and spectators, and her lawyers, who had been a source of information on the proceedings, were served with gag orders in October forbidding them from releasing information. As a result, Monday's verdict was initially relayed to The Associated Press by a legal official who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities.

Defense lawyers are expected to file appeals in the coming days for Suu Kyi and two colleagues who were also convicted Monday, the legal official said. They have argued that Suu

Kyi and a co-defendant, former President Win Myint, could not be held responsible for the statements on which the incitement charge was based because they were already in detention.

Win Myint's sentence was reduced along with Suu Kyi's.

February's seizure of power was met by nonviolent nationwide demonstrations, which security forces quashed with deadly force. They have killed about 1,300 civilians, according to a detailed tally compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Peaceful protests have continued, but amid the severe crackdown on them, an armed resistance has also grown, to the point that U.N. experts have warned the country is sliding into civil war. Monday's verdict could inflame tensions even further.

"It doesn't matter for the woman who doesn't need anything. But the fires will burn hotter and hotter for the one who wants everything," Zenn Khi, a well-known actor, wrote on Facebook, in a reference to Suu Kyi and her military antagonists.

Decisions in other cases against Suu Kyi are expected next week. The cases against her include the alleged unregistered import and use of walkie-talkies by her security guards; a violation of the Official Secrets Act, in which jailed Australian economist Sean Turnell is a co-defendant; and corruption charges.

The military says its takeover was lawful and not a coup because the 2008 constitution — implemented under military rule — allows it to take control in certain emergencies. It argues that the 2020 general election contained widespread irregularities and thus constituted such an emergency. The state election commission and independent observers have disputed that there was substantial fraud. Critics also assert that the takeover bypassed the legal process for declaring an emergency. □

Ex-foreign minister to run in Venezuelan election do over

By REGINA GARCIA CANO
Associated Press

BARINAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Sunday named a former foreign minister as his party's candidate for a special gubernatorial election in the home state of his mentor, Hugo Chávez, that was scheduled after the opposition contender in November's regular contest was retroactively disqualified. Maduro declared Jorge Arreaza as the ruling party's candidate via a livestream connected to a gymnasium in the rural state of Barinas packed with supporters who erupted in cheers as their new candidate promised them a comprehensive

review of their communities' needs.

The announcement came less than a week after the country's highest court disqualified Freddy Superlano as he was leading the vote count, a move that has become emblematic of what the opposition says are unfair election conditions. The state in northwest Venezuela has long been considered a bastion of Chávismo., which made Superlano's potential win particularly hard to swallow for the ruling party.

Superlano was ahead by less than 1 percentage point in the Nov. 21 race against incumbent Argenis Chávez, one of Hugo Chávez's brothers, when



Jorge Former foreign minister Jorge Arreaza, left, and socialist party leader Diosdado Cabello sit together during an event in Barinas, Venezuela, Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

he was disqualified. Argenis along with Adán Chávez and father Hugo de los Reyes Chávez have served as governors of the state of Barinas since 1998.

The opposition announced

Saturday that Aurora Silva, Superlano's wife, would take his place in the election. But Superlano's campaign late Sunday said Silva appeared to have been disqualified but did not immediately provide details.

Leaders of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela convened in Barinas this week to decide on a new candidate after Argenis Chávez announced his decision to resign as governor and not enter the race again. They needed a unifying candidate after many blamed the election's results on an internal

rift.

"(This is) giving a golden opportunity to the community of Barinas to go to a new gubernatorial election," Maduro told the crowd. "I thanked him publicly in that private meeting for taking a step aside and facilitating the appointment of a new candidate" in the election.

Venezuela's Supreme Court of Justice on Monday ruled that Superlano should not have been on the ballot because he had been disqualified over an administrative sanction imposed in August stemming from his work as a legislator between 2015 and 2020. The ruling did not explain why Superlano's participation was initially authorized while other candidates were kept out of the election.

The disqualification raised further doubts about the fairness of Venezuela's electoral system following the first vote in years in which most major political forces agreed to take part and which was monitored by observers from the European Union. □

U.S. religious group says Haitian gang releases 3 hostages

By PETER SMITH and EVENS
SANON

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— A religious group based in Ohio announced Monday that a violent gang in Haiti has released three more hostages, while another 12 remain abducted. The statement from Christian Aid Ministries said the people were released on Sunday in Haiti and are "safe and seem to be in good spirits." The group provided no further details. On Nov. 21, the religious organization announced that the 400 Mawozo gang had released the first two hostages of a group of 17 kidnapped in mid-October. There are 12 adults and five children in the group of 16 U.S. citizens and one Canadian, including an 8-month-old.

The leader of the 400 Mawozo gang has threatened to kill the hostages unless his demands are met. Authorities have said the gang was seeking \$1 million per person, although it wasn't immediately clear that included the children in the group.

"We are thankful to God that three more hostages were released last night," said the statement from Christian Aid Ministries, an



Workers ride out of the gate of the Christian Aid Ministries headquarters in Titanyen, north of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Monday, Dec. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

Anabaptist missions organization based in Berlin, Ohio. "As with the previous release, we are not able to provide the names of the people released, the circumstances of the release, or any other details."

The group reiterated its request for supporters to devote Monday through Wednesday as days of prayer and fasting "to intercede for those who are still being held as well as those who have been released." The release comes amid an ongoing spike in kidnappings in the capital of Port-au-Prince and elsewhere in Haiti, which is struggling to recover from the July 7

presidential assassination, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck in mid-August and a severe fuel shortage. On Sunday, a gang leader known as "Ti Lapli" posted a YouTube video warning people not to cross in upcoming days through the Martissant community, which has been the site of violent clashes between warring gangs. "Insecurity has increased," the gang leader said. "I invite the people of Martissant to stock up on food and gasoline. The next few days will be difficult... We will not remain with our arms crossed in face of those who try to destroy us." □

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Travellers' Choice 2020

LOCAL



Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Marriott Surf Club

NOORD — Recently, Ms. Kimberly Richardson had the great pleasure to honor a Loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba as Distinguished Visitors at their home away from home. The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between 10-20-35 and more consecutive years.

The honorees were:

Dean and LeeAnne Wolanyk from Idaho

William and Sharon Findlay from New Jersey

Richardson thanked them for choosing Aruba as their vacation destination and as their home away from home for so many years together with the members of Marriott Surf Club.

Top reason for returning provided by the honorees were:

Family time, friendly people of the Island and great weather and to them Aruba is their home away from home.



Aruba to me



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't

that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a beautiful picture from longtime readers and followers **Carmela & Joseph Villari** who are back again enjoying their stay at the Hilton Aruba Resort.

They wrote:

"Aruba to us is our private paradise. We are back again and continuing for the last 17 years. Here is pic of us enjoying a beautiful dinner at Azia".

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Article by Etnia Nativa

WhatsApp us 592 2702 and book your Aruban experience!

Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Fishing as a way of life

Episode CXXXIII - 133

NOORD — One of the activities that man developed thousands of years ago among many in the gathering of subsistence was fishing. Lakes, river and the vast oceans offered abundance live supporting resources. When man reached these South West Caribbean islands it wasn't any different. Aruba being the closest to the main land and its hills gave a 360 degree view all over the sea and a sense of security. Since the time of the Paleo Amerindian islander depended greatly on the fruits which the sea provided. Since the Stone Age, men caught fish, both in inland waters and in the sea. They caught fish using their hands, made sea traps, spears, arrows and harpoons to aid the activity.

The Arubans, just like other many Windward Islanders engaged during the late colonial era till mid last century, mainly in coastal fishing. Using rowing-boats or small sailing-boats, later provided with combustion motors. Dragnets and canisters in shallow water techniques were also applied. Fishermen carried on their trade around the Monges Islands and off the opposite coast. Here they employing big fishing schooners from 5 to 40 gross registered tons burthen with Venezuelan



crews. The coastal fishermen supply fresh fish, but the catches of the bigger cutters, though brought to Aruban markets in greater quantity, the catch was less fresh, since it remained in cold storage for some time. At a rough estimate there were about a hundred professional small fishing boats.

Cruising off the coast the Aruban fisherman patiently waited for a fish willing to snap at the bait on the drag-line, in nets and traps. Veritable giants are sometimes caught. Barracudas weigh from 9 to 44 pounds and measure from 3 to almost 7 feet. The king-fish has a weight from 22 to 44 pounds; the grouper may tip the scales at 155, whilst garfish, having a length of nine feet, weigh over 132 pounds.

When fishing with deep-sea lines just over the bottom of the sea the boat is kept in place by means of a piece of

rock serving as an anchor. The two most important species of fish by far caught in this manner are the pargo or red snappers and a variety of groupers like the mero, jeanpao and the wowo di boyo as a source of income, however fishing did not mount in much financial income those days however a great source to satisfying the nutritional needs.

On Aruba and Curacao there were no facilities to keep a large quantity of fish for some days. Not until 1911 was there the first cold storage but with restricted accommodation on Aruba. □

Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. etnianativa03@gmail.com or Whatsapp us 297 592 2702 for a private reservation.

It's official The Holiday Inn has the best entertainment in Aruba

PALM BEACH — The Holiday Inn Resort in the high rise area in Palm Beach has the best evening entertainment options in Aruba.

It is now the home to Aruba Ray's Comedy Show, the standup comedy show that features American comedians who have all appeared on Netflix, HBO, Comedy Central, Showtime, and all major television networks. The show is hilarious, and an EXCELLENT way to spend the night out.

This comedy show has been the Number One Rated Show on TripAdvisor for the past eight years, and also the Number One Rated Nightlife Activity on TripAdvisor as well.

"The performing space at the Holiday Inn is awesome, it's spacious and comfortable," said Ray "Aruba Ray" Ellin, who started doing these shows in Aruba in 2013, after falling in love with the island. "And the GM, Simone Farci, has done amazing things with the resort."

Ellin clearly knows comedy. Besides setting up Aruba Ray's, he was the Executive Producer of the popular television show "This Week at the Comedy Cellar" on Comedy Central, and produced and directed the 20th Century Fox film "The Latin Legends of Comedy." He was also the host of many tv shows in the States, and performs

regularly at Comedy Cellar in New York, one of the best comedy venues in America.

After the comedy show, guests are invited to enjoy the Palicoco Piano Bar across the hall, which features live music and cocktails for a fun, sing along time.

Tickets for the comedy shows are limited. You can purchase them online at www.arubacomedy.com, and consider the optional pre-show dinner menu at Seabreeze restaurant as well.

This is a complete night of entertainment! □



FPNA announces Annual Nature Photography Competition



ORANJESTAD - The National Park Aruba Foundation (FPNA) organizes its second 'Nature Photography Competition', for both professional and amateur photographers.

With this competition, the FPNA hopes to capture the unique and diverse beauty of Aruba's natural values and help create awareness about the conservation of nature all around Aruba and not only in protected areas managed by the FPNA. This year's theme for the 'Nature Photography Competition 2021' is Aruba's Marine Life.

Our marine life is spectacular, has incredible biodiversity, and is worthy of protection and preserved for future generations to explore. The FPNA suggests a few subjects, like marine plants or animals, the behavior of these marine animals, macro marine photography, underwater landscapes, and marine art.

These are simple suggestions, and participants are free to enter any photo related to the marine life that connects in one way or another with the natural marine values of Aruba.

If you are interested in marine photography, you can visit our Facebook page for information on a digital photography workshop by artist and talented photographer Armando Goedgedrag. This workshop takes place on December 2, 2021, at 6:30 p.m., where he will share his underwater photography skills. The last entry day of the 'Nature Photography Competition 2021' is December 31, 2021.

A renowned judging panel consisting of marine life experts and art experts, representatives of Aruba Post, and the FPNA will vote for the winning photos. The prizes include cash, an exhibition of the winning pictures by the FPNA and the winning photo will be made into a special edition postal stamp courtesy of the Post Office Aruba.

For more information about the rules for the 'Nature Photography Competition 2021' and the digital photography given by Armando Goedgedrag, please visit Aruba National Park Foundation on Facebook or their website www.arubanationalpark.org, or send email to marinepark@arubanationalpark.org. □

Liz Weston: 8 rules for saving, borrowing and spending money

By **LIZ WESTON** of NerdWallet

The best personal finance advice is tailored to your individual situation. That said, a few rules of thumb can cut through the confusion that often surrounds money decisions and help you build a solid financial foundation.

The following guidelines for saving, borrowing, spending and protecting your money are culled from nearly three decades of writing about personal finance.

1. PRIORITIZE SAVING FOR RETIREMENT

In an ideal world, you'd start saving with your first paycheck and keep going until you're ready to retire. You also wouldn't touch that money until retirement. Even if you can't save 15% of your pre-tax income for retirement, as recommended by Fidelity and other financial services firms, anything you put aside can help give you a more comfortable future. Aim to take full advantage of any company match you get from a 401(k) at work — that's free money — and borrow against or cash out retirement funds only as a last resort.

2. SAVE FOR A RAINY DAY

You may have read that you need an emergency fund equal to three to six months of expenses, but it can take years to save that much. That's too long to put off other priorities,

like saving for retirement. A starter emergency fund of \$500 can be your first goal, and then you can build it up. While you're saving, try to create other sources of emergency cash, such as a Roth IRA (you can pull out your contributions at any time without taxes or penalties), space on your credit cards or an unused home equity line of credit.

3. SAVE FOR COLLEGE

Got kids? Open a 529 college savings plan and contribute at least the minimum, which is typically \$15 to \$25 a month. Retirement savings comes first, but anything you can save will reduce how much your child may need to borrow. Also, research shows the simple act of saving for college increases the chances that a child from a low- to moderate-income family will go to college.

4. BORROW SMART FOR COLLEGE

A college degree can pay off in higher earnings, but lenders may allow you to borrow far more than you can comfortably repay. If you're borrowing for your own education, consider limiting your total debt to what you expect to make your first year out of school. If you're a parent borrowing for a child's education, aim for payments that are no more than 10% of your after-tax income and that still allow you to save for retirement. If your payments are higher than 10% of your



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

after-tax income, investigate income-driven repayment plans that could bring down your costs.

5. USE CREDIT CARDS AS A CONVENIENCE

Credit cards offer convenience and can protect you from fraud and disputes with merchants. But credit card interest tends to be high, so don't carry credit card balances if you can avoid it. If you routinely pay your balances in full, look for a rewards card with

a sign-up bonus that returns at least 1.5% of what you spend.

6. FINANCE YOUR HOME SMARTLY

If you want to be a homeowner, the best time to buy your first home is when you're financially ready and in a position to stay put for a few years. Opt for a mortgage rate that's fixed for as long as you plan to remain in the home, and don't make extra payments against the principal un-

til you've paid off all other debt and are on track for retirement.

7. BUY USED VEHICLES AND DRIVE THEM FOR YEARS

Buying a car right now isn't a great idea; supply-chain kinks and other pandemic-related issues have inflated the cost of both new and used cars. In general, though, buying a used car can save you a ton of money over your driving lifetime, as can driving your car for many years before replacing it. These days, a well-maintained car can last 200,000 miles without major issues, according to J.D. Power. This means you can get roughly 13 years of service out of your car if you drive it 15,000 miles a year. Ideally, you would pay cash for cars. If you need to borrow, try to limit the term of your loan to a maximum of five years.

8. INSURE AGAINST CATASTROPHIC EXPENSES

Use insurance to protect yourself against catastrophic expenses rather than smaller costs that you can easily pay out of pocket. If you have sufficient savings, consider raising the deductibles on your policies to save money on premiums. Be careful about high-deductible health insurance policies, though. Having a high deductible could cause you to put off medical care, and it's better to err on the side of safety when it comes to health. □

ECB plans to redesign euro bills, decision expected in 2024

BERLIN (AP) — The European Central Bank said Monday that it plans to redesign its euro banknotes, with a final decision on the new look expected in 2024. The euro was introduced in cash form in 2002, with banknotes based on what the Frankfurt-based central bank for the 19-nation euro area calls an "ages and styles" theme — with generic windows, doorways and bridges from various eras that don't represent any specific place or monument. They have undergone one relatively minor

update in that time.

"After 20 years, it's time to review the look of our banknotes to make them more relatable to Europeans of all ages and backgrounds," ECB President Christine Lagarde said in a statement.

She said that euro banknotes "are a tangible and visible symbol that we stand together in Europe, particularly in times of crisis, and there is still a strong demand for them."

The ECB said it will create focus groups to gather opinions from people across

the continent on possible themes for the future notes. A "theme advisory group" with one expert from each eurozone country will then submit a shortlist of suggested new themes to the ECB's governing council.

The bank said it will seek public input on the proposals, then hold a design competition for the new banknotes before again consulting the public. Its governing council will make a final decision and decide on when the new banknotes might be issued. □



Euro coins and banknotes are pictured in a shop in Duisburg, Germany, Saturday, Dec. 29, 2001.

Associated Press

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Plow

1 Sailor's pioneer
call John

5 Accumulate
late limit

10 Gold sources
43 Smell

12 Treat, as
a turkey

13 Gaping

15 Good times

16 Make a choice

17 Busy one
in Apr.

18 Craving

20 Conceited

21 Japanese
noodles

22 Travel stops

23 Grill waste

25 Con
man's con

28 Gibson
garnish

31 Atlantic
catches

32 False

34 Sound of
delight

35 Toronto-
to-D.C.
dir.

36 Paris pal

37 Kindly

40 Blender
setting

DOWN

1 Spoken

2 "Night-
hawks"

3 Black Sea
port

4 Longing

5 Touch
on

6 Small rug

7 Depth
charge,

8 Intercede
in slang

9 Some cars

11 Campfire
treats

14 Realtor's
showing

19 Mosque
leaders

20 Drop in on

24 Group of
nine

25 Reporters'
label

30 — uno

33 Down

35 Storage
spot

38 Maiden
name

39 Old auto

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Yesterday's answer

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42								43	

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-7

CRYPTOQUOTE

EGT SKB ZWB MTC ZGZSP GL
BFBKEZWAXJ EGT'FB BFBK
MBBX. WBSKO. BSZBX.
MCBPPBO. YBBX ZGPO.
LGKJGZ — AZ'M SPP ZWBKB.
— CSES SXJBPQT

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: SHOW ME A GUY WHO'S AFRAID TO LOOK BAD, AND I'LL SHOW YOU A GUY YOU CAN BEAT EVERY TIME. LOU BROCK

Science report: U.S. should make less plastic to save oceans



In this Oct. 22, 2019, photo, plastic and other debris is seen on the beach on Midway Atoll in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Associated Press

By SETH BORENSTEIN

America needs to rethink and reduce the way it generates plastics because so much of the material is littering the oceans and other waters, the National Academy of Sciences says in a new report.

The United States, the world's top plastics waste producer, generates more than 46 million tons (42 million metric tons) a year, and about 2.2 billion pounds (1 million metric tons) ends up in the world's oceans, according to the academy's report.

If the current rise in plastics pollution continues, the world by 2030 will be putting 58.4 million tons (53 million metric tons) into the oceans each year, or about half the weight of the fish caught in seas, the report said.

Recycling and proper disposal alone aren't enough and can't handle the problem, so the "United States should substantially reduce solid waste generation (absolute and per person) to reduce plastic waste in the environment," said the report by the independent body of scientists set up by President Abraham Lincoln to advise the federal government on big research issues.

The plastics issue can't be solved unless the country makes less plastic, designs it differently, keeps better track of it and cleans up more waste, and "that's why our number one recommendation is to reduce

solid waste generation," said report chair Margaret Spring, chief conservation and science officer at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

"We suggest that one way to reduce plastic waste would be to make less plastic," said oceanographer Kara Lavender Law, a report co-author who has conducted numerous studies about plastic waste. "Recycling cannot manage the vast majority of the plastic waste that we generate."

The panel provided a menu of potential ways to fix the plastics problem, starting with "national goals and strategies to cap or reduce virgin plastic production." Virgin plastic is plastic that starts from feedstock that hasn't been used — namely, non-recycled material. The problem, the report said, is that "virgin plastic prices are artificially low due to fossil fuel subsidies, therefore virgin plastics are more profitable to produce" — and U.S. manufacturing of them continues to increase.

"More than 90% of plastics are made from virgin fossil feedstocks, which utilizes

roughly 6% of global oil consumption," the report said. And this makes virgin plastic a climate issue as well as a pollution problem, said study co-author Jenna Jambeck, a University of Georgia researcher who focuses on waste issues.

While recycling "is technically possible for some plastics, little plastic waste is recycled in the United States," the report said, noting that materials put in plastics to change hardness or color make them too complex to recycle cheaply, compared to making new virgin plastic.

"One of the major barriers for recycling is the economics of virgin plastic and subsidization of the fossil fuel industry," Spring said.

The American Chemistry Council, which represents plastics manufacturers, lauded most of the academy's report, but it blasted the idea of limiting plastics production. "This is misguided and would lead to supply chain disruptions, economic and inflationary pressure on already hurt consumers and worse environmental outcomes, particularly related to climate change," American Chemistry Council Vice President Joshua Baca said in a statement. The organization, which touted \$7.5 billion in advanced recycling projects since 2017, called for a study on greenhouse gas implications of raw materials used in packaging and plastic products.

The report's figures and recommendations make sense and are grounded in science, said Australian scientist Denise Hardesty who studies the plastics waste issue but wasn't part of the U.S. report. □

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Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
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Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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Avianca	588 0059
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Surinam	582 7896

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In 'Flee,' an Afghan refugee's tale in vivid animation

NEW YORK (AP) — Jonas Poher Rasmussen was 15 when a boy his same age arrived alone in his small Danish town.

"He arrived all by himself and stayed with a family just around the corner from where I lived," says Rasmussen. "We met at the bus stop every morning going to high school and we became very good friends. Even then I was curious how he and why he had gotten to the village, but he didn't want to talk about it."

It would be a long time before Rasmussen's friend was prepared to tell his story to him, or anyone else. About 15 years ago, Rasmussen, who by then was in radio, asked about making an audio documentary of his story. He wasn't ready. But eight years ago, when Rasmussen was in a program that paired documentary filmmakers with animators, he asked again. This time, his friend was finally ready to talk about his family fleeing war-torn Kabul, Afghanistan, in the 1980s.

"What you see in the film, what you hear in the film, is the first time he's shared the story," says Rasmussen. "It's really difficult for him to talk about."

"Flee," which opened in select theaters Friday and expands in coming weeks, uses animation to



Monica Hellström, left, and Jonas Poher Rasmussen pose with the best documentary feature award for "Flee" at the Gotham Awards at Cipriani Wall Street on Monday, Nov. 29, 2021, in New York.
Associated Press

vividly capture Rasmussen's friend's story. Speaking anonymously under the name Amin, he relates to Rasmussen a five-year odyssey that stretches from Afghanistan to the Soviet Union to Scandinavia. It's a documentary that gives vivid shape to Amin's life and to the harrowing plight of migrants. And it's a film about sharing a secret — a past that Amin doesn't want to be defined by (in present day, he's a successful academic in a lov-

ing relationship with his fiancé Jasper) but that he feels reluctantly compelled to share. It's a testimony. In pairing a painful true tale with colorful animation, "Flee" follows in the recent tradition of films like Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman's "Waltz With Bashir" and "Tower," about a 1966 campus shooting, to intimately render a kind of story usually only filtered through blunter mediums like journalism and traditional documentary. And

it's made "Flee" one of the most acclaimed films of the year. After first premiering at the Sundance Film Festival, where it won best documentary, "Flee" has picked up honors from the Gotham Awards, the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Board of Review. It's Denmark's submission to the Academy Awards, where it will potentially vie for best animated film, best documentary and best international film. Rasmussen originally set out

to make a 20 minute short. But what began hesitantly as a small project of therapy has grown into a global arthouse sensation.

"I'm certain Amin didn't expect to share it with this many people," Rasmussen said smiling, in an interview during a recent trip to New York. "I didn't either."

Rasmussen, 40, was learning the movie's hybrid craft as he went, with animation director Kenneth Ladekjaer. The animation includes scenes of him and Amin talking. It's filled with moments where Amin, often lying down with his eyes closed, slows to summon the courage to psychologically retrace his steps. While the animation can be dazzlingly evocative, to Rasmussen, it's most significant in how it helps you listen, without distraction, to Amin's experience.

"We're exposed to so many stories in the news and in our feeds of people struggling. You have to block things out because if you didn't, you'd lay in bed all day. But because you have the animation in between, it kind of frees you up to listen to what's actually being said and you take it in more," says Rasmussen. "There's something about hearing a real voice, a real human voice, with animation on top." □

Tom Holland's next dance: Playing Fred Astaire



Tom Holland poses for photographers at the photo call for the film 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' in London Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021.
Associated Press

By HILARY FOX
LONDON (AP) — Tom Hol-

land is trading in his Spidey suit for some tap shoes. The

"Spider-Man" star told The Associated Press Sunday that he plans to play Fred Astaire in an upcoming biopic.

"Oh, I am playing Fred Astaire," Holland said at an event in London. "Yeah, I am."

Producer Amy Pascal recently said she wanted Holland to play Astaire, but Holland had yet to comment on the possibility until now.

While Holland's dance background hasn't necessarily been highlighted in his superhero films, the 25-year-old did play the title role in "Billy Elliott: The Musical" from 2008 to 2010.

Holland said he still needs to read the Astaire script, which just came in a week ago.

"I haven't read it yet. They haven't given it to me," Holland added. "Amy Pascal has the script. She FaceTimed me earlier. I was in the bath and we had a lovely FaceTime."

But before he steps into Astaire's shoes, Holland has another Spider-Man movie to unspool on the world: "No Way Home," which hits theaters on Dec. 17. Whether or not there's more Peter Parker in his future remains to be seen.

"I love this character more than anything. This charac-

ter has changed my life. I have a relationship with my fans that is so wonderful. I couldn't ask for it to be any better," Holland said.

"But I want to do what's best for the character. If it's time for me to step down and the next person to step up, I'll do so proudly. You know, I'd love to see a more diverse Spider-Man universe, which would be really exciting. If I could be a part of that — if I could be the Iron Man to the next young Spider-Man or Spider-Woman, that would be great. But at the moment, all I have to think about is the character and what's best for Peter Parker," he said. □

Derby winner Medina Spirit collapses, dies in California

By **BETH HARRIS**
AP Racing Writer

Kentucky Derby winner Medina Spirit collapsed and died after a workout Monday at Santa Anita.

The 3-year-old colt trained by Bob Baffert had just completed five furlongs in his second workout since finishing second in the Breeders' Cup Classic a month ago at Del Mar, according to Craig Robertson, Baffert's attorney. Baffert said in a statement that the horse suffered a heart attack.

"My entire barn is devastated by this news," Baffert said. "Medina Spirit was a great champion, a member of our family who was loved by all, and we are deeply mourning his loss. I will always cherish the proud and personal memories of Medina Spirit and his tremendous spirit."

Santa Anita released a statement saying the track veterinary team took blood, hair and urine samples from Medina Spirit and sent them to the California Horse Racing Board. The colt will undergo a full necropsy, as required by the racing board, to try to de-



John Velazquez atop Medina Spirit competes during the 146th Preakness Stakes horse race at Pimlico Race Course, Saturday, May 15, 2021, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

termine the exact cause of death.

Medina Spirit tested positive after the May 1 Derby for betamethasone, a legal medication that is not allowed on race day. It was Baffert's record seventh win in the Derby. In the wake of Medina Spirit's failed test, Baffert was suspended by Churchill Downs and barred from entering horses

in the 2022 and 2023 Kentucky Derbies. He also was banned by the New York Racing Association from entering horses at its Belmont, Saratoga and Aqueduct tracks.

Last Friday, Robertson released a statement saying that tests done by a New York lab have "definitely confirmed" Medina Spirit tested positive for the ste-

roid — not through an injection but due to an ointment used to treat a skin rash.

The Kentucky Horse Racing Commission has been investigating the case, and has yet to hold a hearing that could possibly disqualify Medina Spirit.

In the \$6 million BC Classic, Medina Spirit couldn't muster the necessary late kick to threaten winner Knicks

Go.

"I'm very proud of him. He ran a great race," Baffert said last month. "To me, he's the best 3-year-old. He showed it today. That's what racing is all about, proving it on the racetrack. And he proved it today that he's the real deal."

Baffert was allowed to enter horses in the season-ending world championships, but the event's money-leading trainer had to meet certain conditions, including stricter out-of-competition testing of his horses and greater security at his barn. He agreed to the extra scrutiny and was required to pay for it out of his own pocket.

Medina Spirit had five wins in 10 career starts and earnings of \$3,545,200, according to Equibase. The colt was owned by Amr Zedan, who competes as Zedan Racing Stables.

"Our most sincere condolences go out to Mr. Amr Zedan and the entire Zedan Racing Stables family," Baffert said in his statement Monday. "They are in our thoughts and prayers as we go through this difficult time." □

U.S. sets world record, Dutch sweep at World Cup speedskating

By **BETH HARRIS**
AP Sports Writer

KEARNS, Utah (AP) — The United States set a world record in winning the men's team pursuit and the Netherlands swept the men's 1,000 meters for the third straight speedskating World Cup on Sunday.

The U.S. team of Joey Mantia, Emery Lehman and Casey Dawson won in 3 minutes, 34.47 seconds on the high-altitude ice at the Utah Olympic Oval, bettering the old mark of 3:34.68 set by the Netherlands in February 2020 on the same ice at the world single-distance championships.

The U.S. team on Sunday also lowered the American record of 3:37.22 by Shani Davis, Brian Hansen and Jonathan Kuck set in November 2013 at the Utah oval.

"It's nice to beat Shani, Jonathan and Brian's national

record. Pretty incredible skaters in their time," Lehman said. "To go three seconds faster than they did, it says a lot."

The Americans let Mantia lead all eight laps, with his teammates pushing him from start to finish. The result was a world record and a tired Mantia. The 35-year-old from Ocala, Florida, collapsed afterward on his back, his chest heaving.

"He's really the leader," Dawson said of Mantia. "Us two, we're the engines in the back pushing him. That's how we think about it. We're just like a train going around the track."

It's a strategy the U.S. men have been employing for a couple years, although Mantia rarely practices with Lehman and Dawson. "They just do a great job practicing the pushing and obviously it shows out there," Mantia said. "I focus

on being strong for eight laps in the front. I don't always have to skate with them to make that happen."

Norway finished 1.92 seconds behind at 3:36.40. Italy was third.

Thomas Krol led a 1-2-3 sweep by the Dutch in the 1,000 meters, winning in 1:06.44. Defending Olympic champion Kjeld Nuis took silver at 1:06.86. Hein Otterspeer earned bronze at 1:06.95.

"I gave this one away," Nuis said. "The first 200 were a bit too aggressive."

The Dutch also swept the event at the season-opening World Cup in Poland and again two weeks ago in Norway.

Japan earned victories in the men's 500 and women's 1,500 on the final day.

Wataru Morishige won the second 500 in 33.99 seconds. Artem Arefyer of Rus-



Team United States competes during the men's team pursuit at the World Cup speedskating race at the Utah Olympic Oval, Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021, in Kearns, Utah.

Associated Press

sia took silver in 34.00. Laurent Dubreuil of Canada earned bronze at 34.053.

Miho Takagi won the 1,500 in 1:49.99 to go with her victory in the 1,000 a day earlier. Her teammate, Ayano Sato, finished second at 1:51.468.

Antoinette de Jong of the

Netherlands was third at 1:51.72. American Brittany Bowe finished eighth.

Ivanie Blondin of Canada won the women's mass start in 8:31.87. Marijke Groenewoud of the Netherlands was second at 8:31.88. Sofie Haugen of Norway finished third. □



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Analysis: Deciding when to gamble a coach's toughest choice

By **BARRY WILNER**
 AP Pro Football Writer

John Harbaugh has the best kicker in the NFL, currently and possibly ever. Yet, trailing by one point, he left Justin Tucker on the sideline Sunday night and went for a 2-point conversion in the dying seconds at Pittsburgh.

Lamar Jackson didn't quite have enough touch on his pass to an open Mark Andrews, and the Ravens (8-4) fell 20-19 to the Steelers. The defeat dropped Baltimore from the overall lead in the AFC.

It seemed one of the stranger decisions of a strange NFL season. But Harbaugh, one of the league's best coaches, quickly explained his reasoning.

"We tried to win the game right there. We were pretty much out of corners at that point in time," Harbaugh said without noting that Baltimore's secondary has been leaky all season no matter who is playing. "It



Pittsburgh Steelers free safety Minkah Fitzpatrick (39) celebrates after he intercepted a pass to Baltimore Ravens tight end Mark Andrews (89) during the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021, in Pittsburgh.

was an opportunity for us to win the game right there." Considering the versatility of Jackson, it probably was a strong opportunity. But the one item not a ma-

major part of Jackson's bag of tricks is the finesse pass, which is what this play called for.

"You saw the play. It's that close," Harbaugh said. "It's

a game of inches. You saw the speech in, 'Any Given Sunday,' right? That's football. It's just that close."

As is the entire AFC race. Baltimore's decision sur-

prised its archrivals. And didn't.

"I was a little surprised because I ran off the field," said DE Cam Heyward, who is not on special teams. "But we called the timeout, bought me an extra couple of seconds. At first, I thought (Andrews) scored, because he had it in his hand and then he dropped it. But I mean, it's just one or two plays that go your way."

Harbaugh's gamble was in character, according to Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, who has gone up against the Ravens coach for nearly 14 seasons.

"You know what, coach Harbaugh, Miami (Ohio) guy, nothing surprises me," Big Ben said. "And that's why he's, you know, I consider him a great football coach because he takes those chances and believes in his team, and as a player, I'm sure they love that belief in them." □

Associated Press